

little more than 3 feet deep it is so sodden that the iron crowbar sinks slowly in with its own weight. If we did not take care it would be lost beyond recovery in the slough, over which the comparatively dry clay and salt layer forms a crust like a sheet of ice on a swamp. Owing to the hard salt layer in this part where we now are we do not sink through the outer clay. The observed height was 2448 feet.

In the night before February 11 the minimum temperature was only 41.4° , and in the morning the clouds were more compact and more spread over the whole sky than ever, and a fine light drizzle fell at times. Both to the north and south the hills were extremely dim and indistinct, in consequence of this annoying rain mist. All the time we had had a singular mixture of good and bad luck: good in that it had not rained heavily, bad because we had not had a single fine day. But fortunately we were much more than half-way, and, according to Ali Murat, had only 9 farsakh more to the shore. Nine farsakh is a good stretch, even on ordinary ground, but on the clay it amounts to twice as much. It was thick, half dark, and disagreeable as on the coast of a northern sea in autumn.

When the new day dawned we could see that we had come into a belt of miry clay, and that the comparatively dry spot where we camped was like an island in the midst of it. The fine rain dripped from our clothes and from the camels' wool, and from the map sheet I always had at hand to take my bearings and insert my drawings. The caravan which proposed in Turut to join company with us seemed to have been wise in waiting. We did not start a minute too soon, for if we had delayed we should have had to wait several days, unless we preferred to choose the eastern roundabout route.

Though the firm ground above the slough is so thin no sign of yielding under the weight of the camels was perceptible, a circumstance probably due to the salt layer. If that were absent it might be risky to spend a night on this abyss of loose mud.

Then we leave the small island and splash on again out into the slime, which squelches and spurts up round our